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Former Defendant Tells Role In Bomber Export Scheme

Testifies He Trained Pilots, Mechanics
At Air Force Base Near Lisbon, Portugal

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By RON MASELKA

The trial of three men alleged to be part of an international conspiracy to illegally fly B-26 bombers from Tuscon, Ariz., to Portugal resumes today in Federal Court.

During a 90-minute session Thursday afternoon, a former defendant testified that he trained pilots and mechanics to handle the bombers at Tancos AFB, 60 miles from Lisbon, Portugal.

Under government subpoena, Keat E. Griggers, 42, a pilot-mechanic from Jamestown, Calif., said that in his three-month stay in Portugal in the summer of 1965, "I was led to believe the aircraft were to be used in Mozambique and Angola."

Contract Signed in Portugal

One defense attorney has claimed that the bomber-exporting venture had the approval of the U. S. State Department and the CIA and that the planes were destined for use by Portugal against rebellious colonies.

Mr. Griggers said in mid-July 1965, he signed a contract with an Antoine Beaumont in Portugal in which he was to familiarize the Portuguese Air Force with "technical information" on the B-26.

Asked by Judge John O. Henderson what his mission was, Mr. Griggers replied: "I was to train pilots and mechanics."

In charge of supervising the refitting of the planes in Tuscon, Mr. Griggers said that seven aircraft arrived in Portugal.

Charges against Mr. Griggers were dropped without explanation before the trial started.

Defendant Not Apprehended

Remaining defendants are: John R. Hawke, 28, a former British RAF pilot residing in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; Henri Montmarin, 58, a French count,

and Woodrow W. Roderick, 47, a Winnepeg, Man., businessman.

One defendant, Gregory R. Board, 45, of Tuscon, has not been apprehended.

Mr. Griggers said the first B-26, piloted by Hawke, flew to Rochester during the 1965 Memorial Day week-end, where long-range fuel tanks were installed.

Later that summer, Mr. Griggers said he and Board acquired some surplus parts from a Rochester firm, including propellers, gunsights, machine gun mounts and B-26 instruction manuals.

These were loaded aboard a C-46 cargo plane, which landed in Portugal, Mr. Griggers added.

Charged With Conspiracy

"I never returned to the U. S. until all this came about," he continued, noting shortly after arriving at Tancos, he signed the contract with Antoine Beaumont.

Specifically the defendants are charged with conspiracy to export the World War II vintage planes without an export license or written U. S. State Department approval.

Asked by de Montmarin's attorney, Edward Brodsky of New York, whose responsibility it was to get the export license, Mr. Griggers said: "I would say Mr. Board."

Noting that he had worked with Board in exporting B-17's to Europe, Mr. Griggers added: "I had no reason to believe this was an illegal operation."